Lesson Five: The Present Tense Verb in the State of Rafa' [رَفْع]

INTRODUCING *GRAMMATICAL STATES*

Like people, Arabic words experience states. Human emotional states occur as a result of our daily interactions and are indicated by our facial expressions. For example, meeting a friend makes us happy, which is then expressed on our faces by smiling.

Arabic words behave in a similar manner. In a sentence they interact with surrounding words and, as a result, experience *grammatical states*. These *grammatical states* are then expressed on the end of the word. Just as a person's face indicates his emotional state, the last letter of a word reveals its *grammatical state*. While people experience many emotional states, Arabic words experience only four *grammatical states*:

1) *rafa'* (**رَفْع**)
2) *nasb* (**نَصْب**)
3) *jarr* (**جَرّ**)
4) *jazm* (**جَزْم**)

PRINCIPLE ONE

Of the four *grammatical states*, Arabic *verbs* only experience three[18]:

1) *rafa'* (**رَفْع**)
2) *nasb* (**نَصْب**)
3) *jazm* (**جَزْم**)

[18] The fourth state, *jarr* (**جَرّ**), is experienced only by nouns.

PRINCIPLE TWO

All *present tense verb*s, active and passive voice, are in the *state* of *rafa'* (**رَفْع**). Conjugations of the *present tense verb* end with either (1) a *dammah* (ُ) on the last letter or (2) a *nūn* (**ن**) as the final letter (*table 4.2*). Both of these endings are signs of the *grammatical state* of *rafa'* (**رَفْع**).

PRINCIPLE THREE

When considering the *grammatical states* of words in general, and verbs in particular, three questions must be asked.

1) What is the *grammatical state* of the word?
2) What *caused* it to enter this *grammatical state*?
3) How does it *reflect* its *grammatical state*?

Asking these three questions helps illustrate the principles of this lesson. Consider for example, **يَفْعَلُ** (*he does*):

1. What is the *grammatical state* of the verb?
   The verb **يَفْعَلُ** is in the *state* of *rafa'* (**رَفْع**).
2. What *caused* it to enter this *grammatical state*?
   Rafa' (**رَفْع**) is the *default state* of *present tense verbs*.
3. How does it *reflect* its *grammatical state*?
   The *state* of *rafa'* (**رَفْع**) is *reflected* by the *dammah* (ُ) on the last letter of **يَفْعَلُ**.

As a second example, consider the verb **تفْعَلُوْنَ** (*you* [*masculine, plural*] *do*):

1. What is the *grammatical state* of the verb?
   The verb **تفْعَلُوْنَ** is in the *state* of *rafa'* (**رَفْع**).
2. What *caused* it to enter this *grammatical state*?
   Rafa' (**رَفْع**) is the *default state* of *present tense verbs*.
3. How does it *reflect* its *grammatical state*?
   The *state* of *rafa'* (**رَفْع**) is *reflected* by the *nūn* (**ن**) at the end of **تفْعَلُوْنَ**.

PRINCIPLE FOUR

As an exception to the principles of this lesson, a subset of Arabic words never enter *states*. These are called *stateless* (**مَبْنِي**) and are similar to a stoic person who is indifferent to emotional situations. Just as such a person does not experience emotion, *stateless* (**مَبْنِي**) words do not enter *grammatical states*.

PRINCIPLE FIVE

By definition, two conjugations of the *present tense verb* are *stateless* (**مَبْنِي**). They are the third person feminine plural (**يَفْعَلْنَ**) and the second person feminine plural (**تَفْعَلْنَ**). The final *nūn* on each of these conjugations is not a reflection of *grammatical state*; instead, it indicates the subject of the verb (i.e., a group of women). The importance of recognizing these two conjugations as *stateless* (**مَبْنِي**) will become apparent in the next lesson where changes in *grammatical states* are discussed.

PRINCIPLE SIX

All *past tense verbs* (*lesson three*) are also classified as *stateless* (**مَبْنِي**).